

ENOUGH ROOM FOR THE EAGLE AND DRAGON?  
CHINESE RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND ITS IMPACT ON U.S. MILITARY  
OPERATIONS IN WEST AFRICA

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Strategic Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

ENOUGH ROOM FOR THE EAGLE AND DRAGON?: CHINESE RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND ITS IMPACT ON U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS IN WEST AFRICA, by Major Kevin P. Peel, 78 pages.

The establishment of USAFRICOM in 2008 signaled the potential for a new subfocus of the U.S. military on the African continent. In West Africa, China was already firmly rooted with deep economic ties, and a plethora of trade deals to extract resources. Simultaneously, trans-national terrorist groups began to gather on the fringes of West Africa, presenting regional security concerns with potentially global impacts. But was China's foothold in the region enough to hinder or prevent U.S. military access to the region? This research study explores the impact of China's state run resource extraction in West Africa, and the impact it had and continues to have on the U.S. DoD being able to effectively engage with the nations of West Africa.

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## ACRONYMS

CCDR	Combatant Commander
DoD	Department of Defense
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FM	Foreign Minister
FMPRC	Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
ROMO	Range of Military Operations
SCA	Security Cooperation Activities
SPP	State Partnership Program
UN	United Nations
USAFRICOM	United States Africa Command



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

We don't look to Africa simply for its natural resources. We recognize Africa for its greatest resource, which is its people and its talents and their potential.

— U.S. President Barack Obama, 2014

With the stand-up of United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM), the U.S. signaled a significant investment in Africa. The most notable and public show of that was the recent effort to counter the spread of the Ebola virus in Liberia, which was a great undertaking of U.S. military and governmental personnel. Still, open source reporting indicates that more and more nations in West Africa continue to warm to Chinese assistance, in areas ranging from foreign aid, infrastructure planning and construction, resource development and extraction, and, most recently, military aid and assistance.

China has much to gain on the African continent, and especially in resource-rich West Africa. As China's economy continues to grow, the need for more oil and other resources will expand at a faster pace. Similarly, after the United States' recent "Pivot to the Pacific," China continues to look for areas of the world where it can match or surpass the influence of the United States. For many years, sub-Saharan Africa was a lesser priority to the United States because European nations controlled Africa, a vestige of colonial empires of the past. Since 2006, both the U.S. and China increased involvement across Africa—the U.S. via foreign aid and security cooperation activities (SCA), and China via foreign aid, resource development, and infrastructure investment. How is this impacting the approach of the U.S. to gain and maintain influence? Is China acting

deliberately to counter U.S. influence and soft power in the region? Is West Africa the new battleground for spheres of influence between these two major powers? These are some of the questions this thesis will attempt to address.

### Primary Research Question

The corresponding rise in Chinese resource extraction and U.S. military involvement in West Africa does not necessarily imply causation. The primary research question seeks a deeper understanding of possible relationships between these two trends: “has Chinese resource investment in West Africa impacted U.S. military access in the region?” While the U.S. has a multitude of interests in West Africa, ranging from trans-national terrorism, to humanitarian aid, disaster relief and strengthening democratic governments, how much of this increased interest is a result of newfound Chinese economic presence in the region?

### Secondary Research Questions

To fully understand and provide an informed answer to the primary research question, several secondary research questions must first be addressed. A thorough exploration of these questions ultimately leads to an understanding of any strategic impacts, recommended courses of action, and the second and third order effects of falling behind.

The secondary questions to be answered in this thesis are:

1. To what extent has Chinese resource extraction increased in West Africa since 2006?

2. What compensation is China offering to nations in exchange for resource extraction?
3. Has Chinese geopolitical involvement in West Africa increased in the past decade?
4. How has U.S. security cooperation activity increased in West African nations since 2006?
5. Is greater security cooperation partnership planned between the U.S. and West African nations?

Specific and systemic evaluation criteria will weigh the answers to the secondary research questions. The cumulative outcome of that evaluation results in an informed and robust answer to the primary research question and stated problem, as well as recommendations for future research on this topic.

First, a thorough review of Chinese resource extraction in West Africa since 2006 must be conducted in order to understand the current situation. Chinese mining and drilling activity over the past decade identify the degree to which China is involved and invested economically in the region, and potentially indicate plans for future levels of investment. Inherent in this secondary research question is the full course of current projects; i.e., when are current resource extraction projects scheduled to end, and what is the estimated amount of material to be extracted?

Second, it is vital to know what China is offering the nations of West Africa in exchange for resource extraction. Though the most obvious form of compensation is financial assistance, compensation comes in a variety of forms. Among them: investment in infrastructure upgrades, increased trade or preferred trade status, SCA, or a number of

other means to entice West African nations to allow China to extract resources. The resources at hand for the purposes of this thesis are addressed defined later in this chapter.

Third, China's geopolitical activities in the region, plus its role in intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Group of 20 (G20), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Bank, potentially provide insight on its level of commitment to West African nations. As many African Nations have traditionally held lesser positions, if any positions at all, in prominent international organizations, Chinese geopolitical activity in West Africa, as defined later in this chapter, brings potential opportunity. That opportunity is accompanied by a sense of importance, as if to say "if a major world power is paying attention to us, we must be major world players, too." The nature of "geopolitical activities" is addressed in the Terms and Definitions section of this chapter.

It is also fundamental to identify the current SCA between the U.S. and the nations of West Africa, and any increases since 2006. The establishment of USAFRICOM in 2007 points to an understanding among U.S. policymakers of the importance of the African continent. But the establishment of a Geographic Combatant Command alone does not lead to tangible results when attempting to foster partnership and increase strategic influence in a region. In order to understand how U.S. strategy is or is not influenced by Chinese economic presence in West Africa, a thorough review of SCA is required. SCA will be defined in the Terms and Definitions section of this chapter.

Finally, in line with the previous secondary research question, it is critical to understand future plans. Strategies by nature constantly undergo slight course corrections in response to variables in execution. Having a picture of planned future SCA will aid in understanding the overall U.S. strategy in West Africa. Additionally, comparing the announcement dates of future plans with Chinese resource extraction activity may potentially point to a more robust relationship between the two.

### Assumptions

Assumptions refer to those conditions, constructs or concepts that the researcher believes to be true for the purposes of answering the primary research question. In order to provide transparent analysis, multiple assumptions must be stated and expanded upon so that the reader consumes the study with a clear picture of the researcher's perspective.

First, the study assumes that China is using resource extraction in West Africa as a tool to expand global influence. As geopolitical influence is a mixture of hard and soft power, economic investment is a solid means of exerting soft power over a nation or region. Just as the U.S. employs instruments of national power that are not strictly of a military nature, China is seeking to exert itself and its own national interests through non-military means. This does not discount the economic benefit to China of resource extraction, however.

The second assumption is that the U.S. seeks greater influence as a whole, and more influence than global rivals, in West Africa. This is evident in the establishment of USAFRICOM within the past decade, as well as the recent humanitarian aid in Liberia. In addition to having historic good relations in the region, as Liberia was the only U.S.

African colony, the U.S. shares multiple common interests with the nations of West Africa. From combating transnational terrorism to

The third assumption is that the U.S. seeks to counter or contain the spread of Chinese influence globally. Many in the U.S. view the Chinese economy is a rival to the U.S. economy, and Chinese military power, though largely still a regional force, as a potential future challenge to U.S. military might around the world. As such, the U.S. strives to contain and overcome rising Chinese influence globally. Seen mainly in the Department of Defense's (DoD) now defunct Pivot to the Pacific, U.S. participation in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the potential for trade organizations like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the U.S. sees China as a challenge to its global standing and will act to prevent that challenge from solidifying.

Finally, this study assumes that the two major topics at hand, Chinese resource extraction and U.S. SCA, are part of a multi-pronged approach by each nation to gain and maintain influence. Though this study focuses on these two issues specifically, it is important to note that these activities do not occur in a virtual geopolitical bubble, sealed off from other actions of each respective nation. As such, the conclusions and recommendations for future research may make seldom reference to other areas of soft power projection.

### Definitions and Terms

In order to ensure a common understanding of potentially broad concepts, the following definitions and terms should provide an element of precision throughout this thesis.



West Africa: the nations of Benin, Burkina Faso, the Cape Verde Islands, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. This is the definition used by USAFRICOM, and these are also the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This differs from the United Nations (UN) definition of West Africa (USAFRICOM 2016).

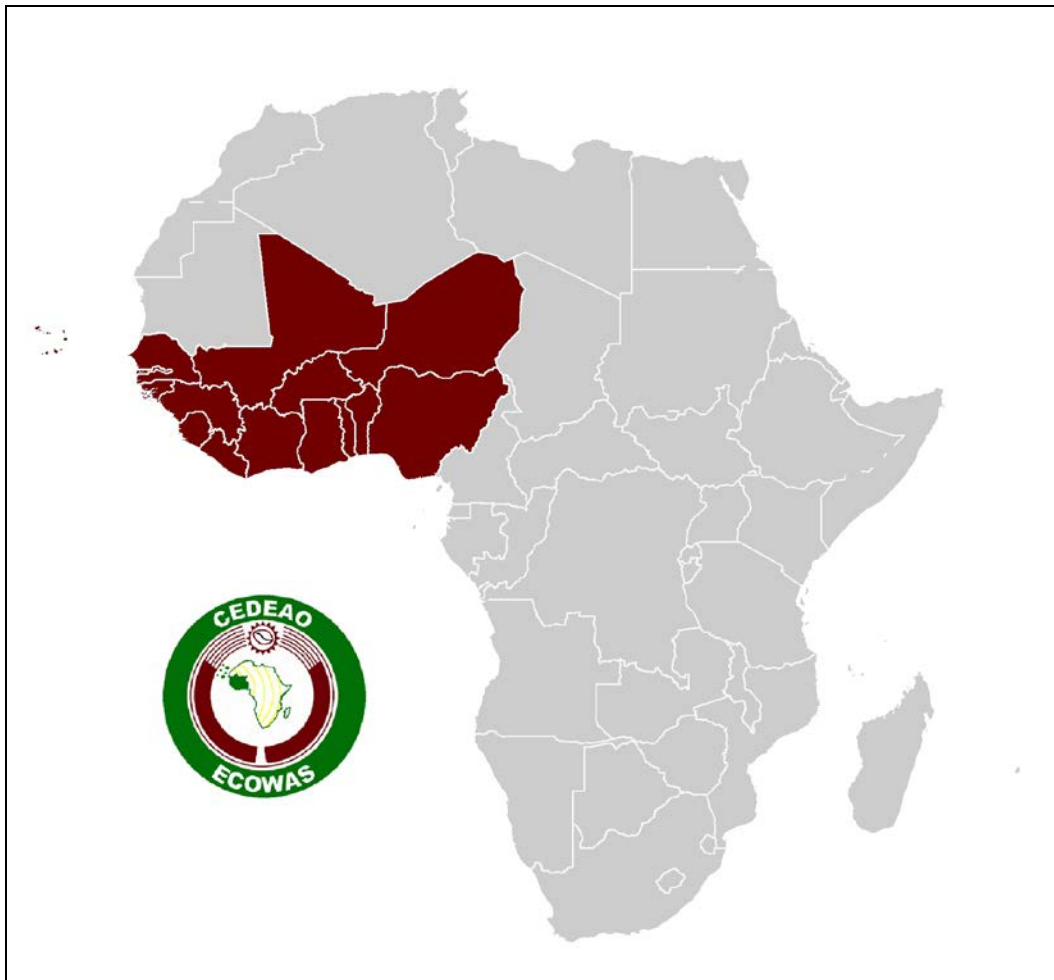


Figure 1. West African Nations in ECOWAS

*Source:* United Nations, “ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States,” Economic Council for Africa: Regional Economic Communities, accessed March 27, 2017, <http://www.uneca.org/oria/pages/ecowas-economic-community-west-african-states>.

Resources: for the purposes of this thesis, “resources” and “resource extraction” refer to the mining of iron ore, and the drilling of oil. While China continues to extract a number of other resources in West Africa, including rare Earth minerals and copper, initial research suggests that iron ore and oil extraction are the two biggest sources of Chinese investment in West Africa at this time (Brautigam 2016).

Security Cooperation Activities: from the Department of Defense (DoD)  
Directive 5132.03, SCA are:

Activities undertaken by the Department of Defense to encourage and enable international partners to work with the United States to achieve strategic objectives. It includes all DoD interactions with foreign defense and security establishments, including all DoD-administered security assistance programs, that: build defense and security relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, including all international armaments cooperation activities and security assistance activities; develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations; and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to host nations. (DoD 2016, 11)

For the purposes of this thesis, SCA include military exercises, the presence of U.S. military advisors, U.S. counterterrorism operations, U.S. foreign internal defense operations, U.S. military involvement in humanitarian assistance, and U.S. weapons sales with, in or to West African nations.

Geopolitical involvement/activities: the Cambridge English dictionary defines geopolitics as “the study of the way a country's size, position, etc. influence its power and its relationships with other countries” (Cambridge 2016). For the purposes of this thesis, geopolitical activities refer to state visits of Chinese leadership, overtures of greater cooperation, or Chinese inclusion of West African nations in international organizations.

### Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations refer to external boundaries to investigation and analysis of the secondary research questions, while delimitations refer to those self-imposed limitations for the purposes of focus or pragmatism. The first and most notable limitation of the research at hand is the availability of information. Specifically when addressing U.S. SCA, both ongoing and planned, much of the information may not be available for public consumption. Combined with the delimitation of keeping this thesis at a level that allows for widest distribution, this limitation is the most significant.

The details of many Chinese partnerships with West African nations are not always released to the public (Basov 2015). As such, this research relies only on what is publicly available, from reputable sources. The scope and depth of much Chinese activity may or may not be available for research, presenting a challenge to building a broad understanding of the topic at hand.

In contrast, the most significant delimitation is the scope of resources researched. China's economic investment in West Africa goes well beyond resource extraction into areas that include infrastructure development and upgrading, or projects to provide sustainable sources of fresh water. Because initial research suggests a majority of China's investment is in resource extraction, this delimitation serves a practical purpose.

The scope of U.S. government actions in the region focuses only on security cooperation activity by the U.S. military for the purposes of this research. Though the U.S. employs a variety of tools to gain and maintain access and influence in West Africa, exploring the impact of Chinese activity to all of those methods exceeds the appropriate scope, depth and length of this study. Also, U.S. private sector activity in West Africa,

especially with regard to oil, is significant. While that investment very likely impacts relations between the U.S. and West African nations, this research does not examine or evaluate that impact.

Similarly, this study is limited in geographic scope to the nations of West Africa. While Chinese economic investment and U.S. SCA are prominent across the entire African continent, West Africa serves a prime focal point because of the concentration of Chinese resource extraction, and ongoing U.S. SCA. Though certainly not intended to be wholly representative of the issues that face the entire continent, West Africa presents a unique case study.

Also, since the researcher does not speak French, Portuguese, or any language native to the African continent, only materials written in English will be considered as part of the literature review. While a great number of publications addressing the research topic at hand are available in English, without the need for translation, a large number of materials were only available in languages spoken on the African continent, or in Mandarin. None of those materials will be used in this research.

The researcher sees the value in conducting quantitative analysis on a number of factors involved in this research. Due to a variety of reasons, including a lack of confidence in the accuracy, precision, and validity of quantifiable data available, trend identification through quantitative analysis is not possible within the confines of this study. Because China and West African nations do not always make information regarding resource extraction agreements public, and because the U.S. military does not always divulge troop numbers for operations or exercises, an accurate depiction is likely not possible.

Finally, all information considered for this thesis entered publication before April 1, 2017. Any content or developments beyond that date do not factor into the literature review, data analysis, findings or recommendations generated in this thesis and the accompanying research process.

### Application to the U.S. Armed Services

This thesis is intended to add to the body of knowledge, specifically related to U.S. security strategy. It does so through the lens of the Army Warfighting Challenge #2/3, “Shape the Security Environment,” defined as:

How does the Army influence the security environment and engage key actors and local/regional forces in order to consolidate gains and achieve sustainable security outcomes in support of Geographic Combatant Commands and Joint requirements? -U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center, 2017.

A thorough and complete analysis of the primary research question lends further insight to the U.S. Army and DoD on approaches to address this Warfighting Challenge in the future.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed a basic introduction to the problem and research question contained in this thesis. This chapter also identified assumptions, common terms, limitations and delimitations used by the researcher throughout this thesis. The next chapter, chapter 2, addresses the literature review, and how the literature addresses the following secondary research questions:

1. To what extent has Chinese resource extraction increased in West Africa since 2006?

2. What compensation is China offering to nations in exchange for resource extraction?
3. Has Chinese geopolitical involvement in West Africa increased in the past decade?
4. How has U.S. security cooperation activity increased in West African nations since 2006?
5. Is greater security cooperation partnership planned between the U.S. and West African nations?

A thematic and systemic literature review answers the secondary research questions listed, and ultimately colors the conclusions of the primary research question, “has Chinese resource investment in West Africa impacted U.S. military access in the region?”

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Chapter Introduction

When addressing the primary research question of this thesis, “has Chinese resource investment in West Africa impacted U.S. military involvement in the region,” conducting a thorough literature review is imperative. This literature review will serve as the basis for chapter 4, after thorough analysis and context is added for a robust picture.

In conducting this literature review, it is important to lay groundwork to serve as a basis for understanding the situation in West Africa. Looking at the level and breadth of Chinese involvement in resource extraction, combined with a sense of current and future compensation or reimbursement provides perspective, and tells at least part of how national leaders in the U.S. view Chinese actions in the region.

Compounding Chinese resource extraction in West Africa is its ongoing use of diplomacy and geopolitics. An accurate portrayal of Chinese diplomatic efforts augments and enhances their resource extraction, painting a broad picture about a potential larger strategy in the region. Such a strategy, whether for economic or geopolitical gain, likely shapes and will continue to shape U.S. response, assuming one is warranted, across the instruments of national power.

The most visible instrument of national power is use of the armed forces. Examining current and planned SCA between the U.S. and the nations of West Africa will allow for trend identification, which may point to an evolving U.S. counterstrategy in West Africa.

### Extent and Scope of Chinese Mineral Extraction in West Africa

Currently, Chinese firms operate three completed iron mines in West Africa. The first is the Tonkolili mine in Sierra Leone, owned by Shandong Iron and Steel Group (Reuters 2015b). A state-owned company, Shandong Iron and Steel group bought this mine from the private, UK-based African Minerals in April 2015, after falling iron prices combined with the Ebola outbreak halted production at these mines (Economist 2015a). In 2016, Shandong Iron and Steel Group invested an additional \$700m in the mine, intended to link it via rail to ports for export back to China (Ford 2016). Worker strikes and uprisings in 2015 and 2016 (Economist 2015b), lawsuits over unlawful evictions and violence against villagers (Sierra Leone Telegraph 2015), and ongoing allegations of worker mistreatment continued to plague this mining project, but the overall impact on production was limited (Smith and Orderson 2016).

The second mine is the Simandou iron mine in Guinea, which Aluminum Corporation of China Limited (“Chinalco”) purchased in 2016 (Els 2016). Production at this mine also experienced a downturn, leading the previous owner, Rio Tinto, to turn over its majority stake in the mine to Chinalco, another state-owned enterprise. As Chinalco works to re-establish the largest mine of any kind in Guinea, experts assess that it will double Guinea’s gross domestic product (GDP) once fully operational (Lewis and B 2016). Guinean national leadership has expressed full trust in Chinalco and the Chinese government at large to bring operations back on-line, thus reinvigorating the national economy (Sharma 2016).

The final iron mine considered in this research is the Bong iron mine in Liberia, owned by China-Union (Reuters 2014). A private, Hong Kong-based corporation, China-



Union took control of the Bong mines in 2008, and pledged \$2.6b over 25 years to revitalize the complex and local area, including building schools and a hospital for the workers and local populace (Baysah 2016). This year, China-Union laid off a number of employees at the Bong mine, citing difficulties to fulfill its investment obligations, and industry (Lomax 2017). Operations at the Bong mine ground to a halt, workers were not paid, and the future of the mine remains in question.

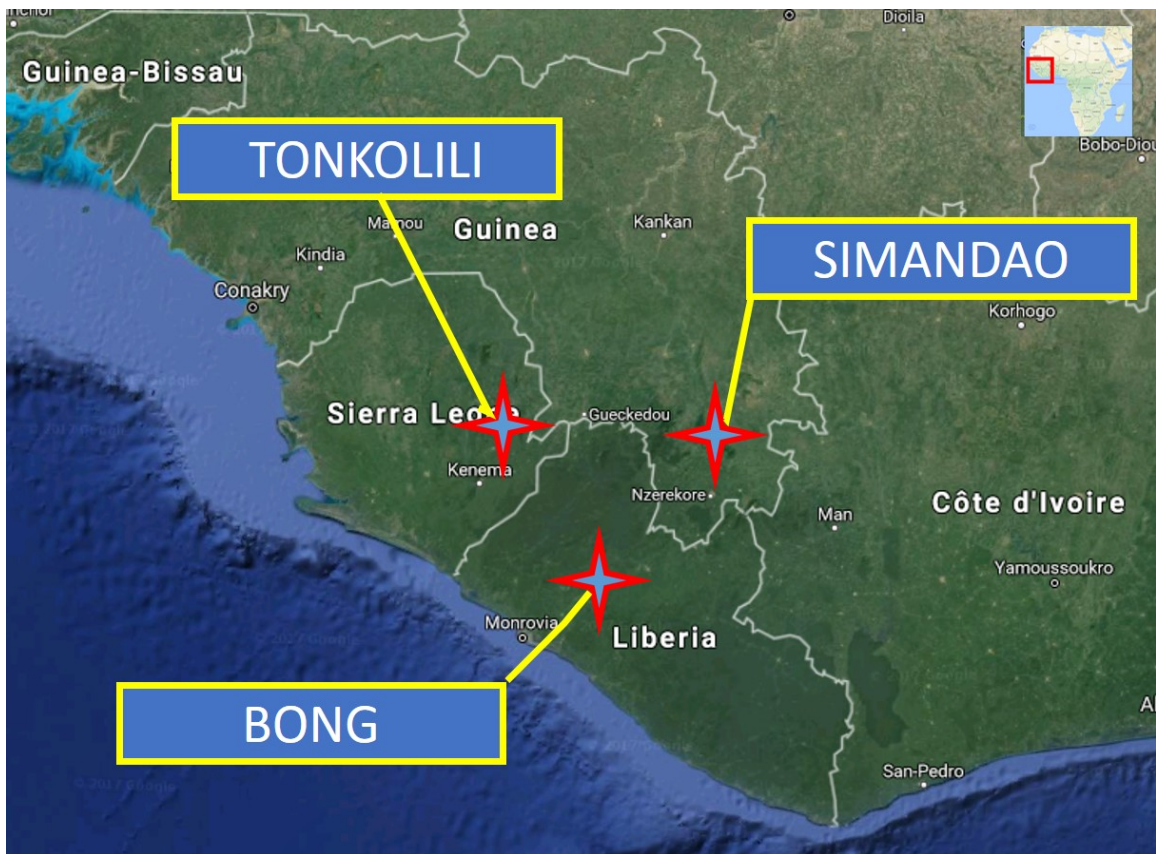


Figure 2. Chinese Iron Mines in West Africa

Source: Google Maps, “West Africa,” accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.google.com/maps/@8.9698927,-9.2024995,1373338m/data=!3m1!1e3>, Modified by Author.

Similarly, there are three Chinese operated or affiliated oil facilities in West Africa. The first, the Jubilee oilfield, is an offshore drilling operation operated by the Ghanaian government. Ghanaian leadership, through the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC), signed an agreement with the China Development bank in 2010, pledging 13,000 barrels from the Jubilee field per day for 15 years in exchange for a \$3b loan (Hardus 2014, 5). When global oil prices nosedived in 2014, both China and Ghana withdrew from the agreement, and the Chinese Development Bank had only paid Ghana \$1b up to that point (Mwanza 2016). However, in 2016, both parties agreed to restart the deal.

The second oil drilling site spans coastal and offshore southern Nigeria, where China Petroleum and Chemical Company (“Sinopec”), a state-owned Chinese company, holds a minority share alongside U.S., UK, and Canadian companies (Kavanagh 2012). It purchased rights to 20% of the oilfields, bolstering its access to Nigeria’s oil wealth. Nigeria, being an Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) member, retains its oil for sale on global markets. China’s increasing interests in Nigerian oil reserves comes in the form of aid to help develop Nigeria’s oil and energy infrastructure (Fick 2016), which will be discussed in another section of this chapter.

China also built and operated the Soraz oil refinery in southern Niger, close to the Nigerian border, and nearly 350 miles from the Diffa oilfields (Rosen 2015). Chinese investment in the exploration and drilling in the Diffa region has been lacking, due mainly in part to recent Boko Haram insurgent activities in the region (Olander and van Staden 2016). A suspicious accident at the Soraz refinery, combined with striking workers and mounting debt related to the facility continue to cause tension between the

Niger government and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), thus placing the future of oil relations between the two countries in question (Reuters 2016).

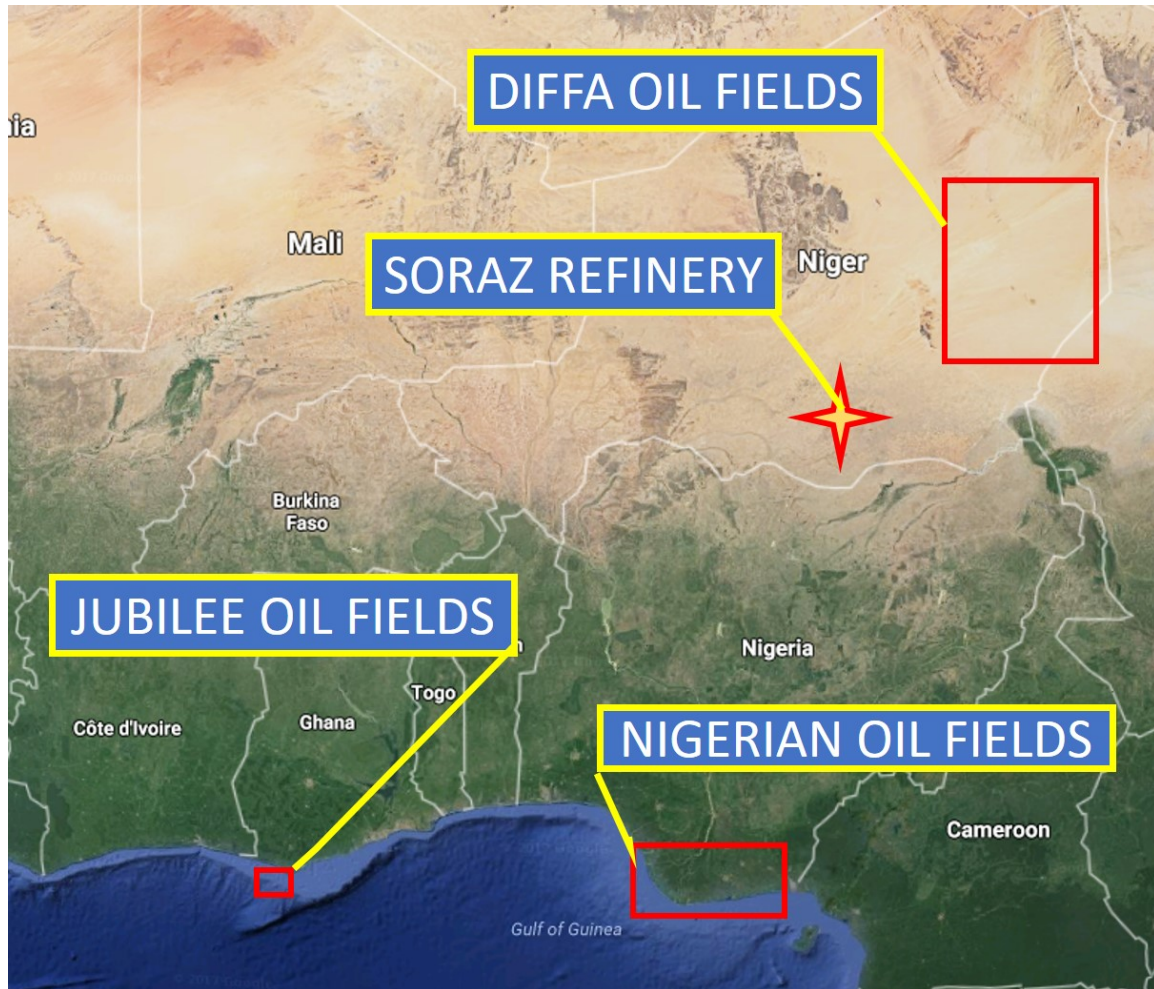


Figure 3. Chinese Oil Facilities in West Africa

Source: Google Maps, “West Africa,” accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.google.com/maps/@12.33646,5.0221395,2748030m/data=!3m1!1e3>, Modified by Author.

These six facilities serve as the basis for the examination of Chinese mineral extraction in West Africa. Though limited in scope, these six facilities comprise all of

China's oil and iron extraction in the region, and account for China's largest resource extraction efforts in West Africa.

### Chinese Compensation to West African Nations

When examining what China gives to the nations of West Africa in exchange for resource extraction and development, three categories of compensation immediately become apparent: increased trade and economic cooperation (including debt relief); infrastructure and energy sector development and revitalization; and humanitarian assistance. China's state news agency, *Xinhua*, boasts a larger list of overall foreign aid, not specific to West Africa:

China offers foreign aid in eight forms: complete projects, goods and materials, technical cooperation, human resource development cooperation, medical teams sent abroad, emergency humanitarian aid, volunteer programs in foreign countries, and debt relief. (Xinhua 2011)

As this literature review identified specific Chinese ventures in West Africa, an examination of ongoing Chinese aid in exchange for those projects is appropriate.

It is important to note that China provides its aid to West Africa under a “no-strings” policy, often giving the impression that nothing is asked for in return, and China as a nation will not intervene in national affairs (Nelson 2016). As discussed in the previous section, access to West African resources is often a condition of investment and aid by China. Additionally, China often funds projects with full knowledge of government corruption. These ideas will be further expanded upon in chapter 4.

China has built hospitals and schools near mining operations and in other cities around Guinea (Polgreen 2009). China continues to provide Guinea with an influx of cash to cancel out loans from the U.S. and other western nations. (Kishi and Ralieg

2015). Additionally, China funded a rail line to transfer the iron ore it mines to a port for shipment back to China (Els 2013).

In Liberia, China gave \$17m in aid for a variety of projects, largely benefiting the quality of life of the local population. Ventures under this aid umbrella include hospitals around mining sites and elsewhere, medical teams in hospitals in the capital, renovation of the national radio broadcasting system, and agricultural training for residents who were displaced or affected by mining operations (Monrovia Inquirer 2013). Additionally, China provided extensive humanitarian assistance to Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone during the Ebola crisis of 2015 (FOCAC 2016a).

In Sierra Leone, China invested significantly in the Sierra Leone Conference on Development and Transformation (SLCDT) (Datzberger 2013), via an \$8b rail and airport project, and a new hospital (Bah 2017). In 2016, after the Ebola crisis ended, China partnered with Sierra Leone to address a serious shortage in doctors and other medical practitioners in the country (FOCAC 2016b). Additionally, China agreed to forgive all Sierra Leone debt, providing a significant economic boost to the nation's devastated economy (Baijie 2016).

In Ghana, China funded approximately \$1b for the construction of a hydroelectric dam, nearly doubling Ghana's access to electricity (Samb 2007). Additionally, as with other nations, China continues to aid in improving rail and road lines of transportation, due in part to the need to transport crude or refined petroleum products (Reuters 2010). Most notable among Chinese aid to Ghana is an education program designed to train Ghanaians in more high-tech jobs (Idin-Arkhurst 2008, 10-11).

In Niger, China has provided more than \$300m to fund multiple development projects including, greater access to fresh water, expansions in the medical field, and additional schools (Xinhua 2016a). Though suspicions abound about deep ties between China and Niger, little else exists in the public realm as to the nature of their relations from an aid perspective.

Nigeria, on the other hand, tells a different story. As Nigeria continues to fight Boko Haram, China leads the way in overt support through technology, weaponry, and military advisors (Ramini 2016). Additionally, China continues to expand its cultural presence and influence in Nigeria, who is a willing partner in that cultural exchange (Ramini 2016). Still a vast majority of economic aid, to include development projects, is not available beyond the 2004-2008 timeframe, with one notable exception: in 2008, China built (and launched in 2011) a Nigerian communications satellite, greatly increasing Central and West Africa's access to voice and data communications (Clarke 2011).

As with the rest of the continent, West African nations continue to benefit from increased trade with China since 1997, and culminating recently in the late 2015 pledge of \$60b by China in development and modernization (Onishi 2015). Multiple African nations, and Nigeria being the most prominent in West Africa, now hold China as their main trading partner, bucking the U.S. and the rest of the western world.

### Chinese Geopolitical Involvement in West Africa

When examining Chinese geopolitical involvement in West Africa since 2006, three key areas deserve consideration: visits by high-ranking Chinese officials, to include President, Foreign Minister (FM), or Trade Minister, to West African nations; visits of

West African high-ranking officials to China; and the expansion of Chinese diplomatic missions or embassies in West African nations.

Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Africa in 2015, pledging \$60 in development aid across the continent, which is a 1200 percent increase since 2006 (Quartz Africa 2015). This was the first visit by a Chinese President since Hu Jintao visited in 2007, who included Liberia on his itinerary, and promised \$3b in debt forgiveness to multiple African nations (Xinhua 2007). Though both presidents met with FOCAC members, several West African nations, including Burkina Faso and the Gambia, do not participate in FOCAC.

Though Jinping limited his 2015 African visit to countries in the south, FM Wang Yi visited Nigeria in January 2017, where he announced plans for \$40b in additional Chinese investment (Scott, Shi, and Ibukun 2017). Simultaneously, the Taiwanese embassy in the Nigerian capital was ordered to move to Lagos, the major commercial hub in Nigeria. Yi visited Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia in 2015, during the height of the Ebola crisis, where he pledged \$120m in aid to fight the disease in West Africa (Reuters 2015a). Yi also visited Ghana and Senegal in 2014 (Quandzie 2014). Despite what may appear as an uptick in Chinese FM visits to West African nations, it is a tradition for Chinese FM to visit Africa yearly.

A number of West African Leaders visited China numerous times in the last decade. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf visited China in 2015, partaking in a state dinner, and visiting another Chinese province to discuss bilateral trade between the two nations (Government of Liberia 2015). This follows a 2010 visit to China by the

Liberian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Minister of Cabinet, Olubanke King Akerele (China Today 2010).

Sierra Leone's President, Ernest Bai Koroma, visited China in late 2016 to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping (Xinhua 2016b). According to the Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China (FMPRC). The two leaders discussed the broadening of relations, including increased Chinese access to Sierra Leonean resources. President Koroma's visit to China follows that of his FM, Samura Kamara, who visited earlier in 2016 (FMPRC 2016a).

Guinean President Alpha Conde visited China in 2016 (FMPRC 2016b). At the Summit between Conde and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Li noted that Guinea is the first sub-Saharan African nation to develop diplomatic ties with China, underscoring a long and deep friendship between the two nations (State Council of the People's Republic of China 2016).

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari visited China to meet with Xi Jinping in 2016, resulting in \$6bn in Chinese investments, along with an agreement to conduct all nation-to-nation financial transactions in the Yuan instead of the U.S. Dollar (Mohammed 2016). Africa analysts suggest that this meeting, the associated aid package, and the recent Chinese FM visit to Nigeria resulted in the movement of the Taiwanese Embassy outside of the Nigerian capital (Scott, Shi, and Ibukun 2017).

No Ghanaian President has visited China since 2007, but Ghanaian government officials continue to urge President Nana Akufo-Addo to visit in 2017 (Fan 2017). The Ghanaian FM, Hanna Tetteh, visited China in 2015 (FMPRC 2015). Similarly, no President from Niger has visited China in the past decade, though sitting President



Mahamadou Issoufou did host the Chinese FM, Yang Jiechi, in Niger in 2012 (FMPRC 2012).

Other senior West African Official visits to China include: then-President Thomas Boni Yayi of Benin, in 2006 (FMPRC 2006), and a delegation from the Benin National Parliament in 2013 (China Agricultural University 2013); none from Burkina Faso, as it retains diplomatic ties with Taiwan; none from Cabo Verde since 2006; none from Côte d'Ivoire since 2006; none yet from the Gambia, as diplomatic relations between the two nations only resumed in 2016 (Ramzy 2016); none from Guinea-Bissau since 2006; none from Mali since 2006; then-President Macky Sall of Senegal visited China in 2014 (FMPRC 2014); and none from Togo since 2006.

China's geopolitical activities in West Africa are consistent with their economic and resource interests. The countries where China have the most to gain, especially with regard to resource extraction, are where China has paid the most attention, via visits by Presidents and other senior government officials. It is clear that the Chinese government understands the importance of maintaining strong relations with a number of West African nations.

#### Current and Future U.S. Security Cooperation Activities in West Africa

The U.S. DoD only established USAFRICOM in 2008, but increased its presence on the African continent ever since. This presence takes the form of informal basing, exercises, humanitarian support, military advisors, and combat operations. Due to the sensitivity of some ongoing operations, and the forward operating locations that house certain forces in Africa, large portions of the relevant data remain unavailable from

official sources. While many reputable sources report on U.S. military operations in Africa, a number of questionable sources provide great levels of detail. As those sources are referenced in this section, notes on their validity will accompany the reference as required.

According to USAFRICOM, and echoed by Global Security, the U.S. has no acknowledged military bases in West Africa (Global Security 2017). In a 2008 visit to Ghana, then President George W. Bush noted that his administration had no desire to build more bases in Africa, but also remarked, “now that doesn’t mean we won’t develop some kind of office somewhere in Africa” (Henry and McCaughan 2008). Though his use of the word “office” was unclear during President Bush’s remarks, 7 years later, USAFRICOM Commander GEN David Rodriguez acknowledged an additional 11 “cooperative security locations (SCLs),” including undisclosed locations in Senegal, Ghana and Gabon (Vandiver 2015). These SCLs are nothing more than staging sites, allowing U.S. forces to quickly prepare to respond to crises in the region. Gen Rodriguez notes: “That enables us to be within four hours of all the high risk, high threat (diplomatic) posts,” likely in the aftermath of attacks on the U.S. Consulate at Benghazi, Libya. Given the U.S. military’s lack of a continuous and conspicuous presence in West Africa, combined with a constant presence of Chinese workers, the populace in the region is likely taking on a more cultural and familiar tone towards Chinese culture. This idea will be discussed further in chapter 4.

Citing various official press releases and named government or military sources, *The Washington Post* claimed in 2014 that the U.S. military occupied some form of base in Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso (Taylor 2014). Using this as a basis for further

speculation, the security blog Tom Dispatch goes onto claim that the U.S. maintains 60 bases across Africa, including those mentioned in the same *The Washington Post* report, and also in Gabon, Senegal, Liberia, and Sierra Leone (Turse 2015). These further claims are scarcely sourced beyond the article in *The Washington Post*; furthermore, other stories from this blog point to bias and opinion that casts shadows on overall validity.

USAFRICOM boasts many multinational exercises across the African continent. The largest and most inclusive exercise involving West African nations is Exercise Obangame Express, designed expressly to counter piracy and “increase safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea” (USAFRICOM 2017a). Regular participants include Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Cabo Verde, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone, as well as other African nations along the Gulf of Guinea. Similarly, Exercise United Accord seeks to increase and enhance interoperability with West African nations participating in the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and is hosted in Ghana in 2017 (USAFRICOM 2017b). Participating nations include Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D’Ivoire, Chad, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Exercise United Focus is a planned regional exercise designed to increase the capabilities of Multinational Joint Task Forces in combating terrorism and violent extremist organizations in the Lake Chad Basin (USAFRICOM 2017c). In 2017, the exercise is conducted in Doula, Cameroon and include the nations of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. Another major regional exercise in West Africa is Flintlock 2017, a Special Operations Forces exercise, promoting border security and protection of

national populations (USAFRICOM 2017d). Participating nations include: Burkina Faso who is hosting the exercise, and Niger, in addition to other Central African nations.

USAFRICOM also boasts a number of Theatre Security Cooperation Programs (TSCPs) across the continent, including the training of African militaries for contingency operations, logistics training and support, maritime capabilities enhancement, training for pandemics and other infectious disease outbreaks, and even veterinary support (USAFRICOM 2017e). USAFRICOM publicly recognizes the importance of interagency partners in accomplishing its mission and meeting U.S. foreign policy objectives. Key USAFRICOM staff includes four Senior Foreign Service (SFS) officers and 30 interagency personnel from such agencies as the U.S. Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Additionally, “the most senior (interagency staff member) is a career State Department official who serves as deputy to the commander for civil-military engagement” (USAFRICOM 2017f). Senior USAFRICOM staff and U.S. Ambassadors to African nations coordinate SCA frequently to provide an integrated approach when addressing issues on the continent.

The U.S. Army National Guard participates in the State Partnership Program (SPP), where each state’s National Guard is paired with a nation around the globe. These partnerships provide mutual training and valuable experience, as well as connections and relationships with international forces worldwide (Marshall 2012). Current West African nations participating in the program include: Niger, paired with Indiana; Nigeria, paired with California; Liberia, paired with Michigan; Benin, and Ghana, both paired with North

Dakota; Togo, paired with North Dakota; and Senegal, paired with Vermont (U.S. Army National Guard 2017).

The most notable recent example of U.S. military humanitarian support to West Africa is the Ebola outbreak of 2014. The U.S. sent forces to Liberia and Senegal to assist in halting the spread of Ebola, treating those infected, and preventing further outbreaks from occurring (Greer 2014). But other, smaller efforts are a routine part of USAFRICOM's mission. For instance, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, funded by the USAFRICOM Humanitarian Assistance Program, constructed a women's regional health center and clinic in Togo, as well as a primary school (Klutts 2015). Similarly, a U.S. Navy vessel delivered wheelchairs and medical supplies to non-profit organizations in Ghana, as part of the Project Handclasp program, a joint project among the U.S. Navy, American people, and private sector (Hensley 2015). Small-scale humanitarian missions are funded and executed by USAFRICOM forces all over West Africa.

Much like attempting to portray an accurate picture of current U.S. military bases in West Africa, depicting an accurate number of U.S. military advisors and ongoing operations in the region is challenging due to the sensitivity of activities. Rough estimates of deployed U.S. forces are available for the entire continent, but very little data is available pertaining specifically to West Africa. The U.S. Army acknowledged in 2016 and 2017 that more forces would be sent to West and Central Africa, mainly to assist in the ongoing conflict with Boko Haram (Tan 2016). The *New York Times* estimates the number of advisors for this conflict alone is 50, and their support is embraced by Nigeria and other neighboring countries (Schmitt and Searcey 2016).

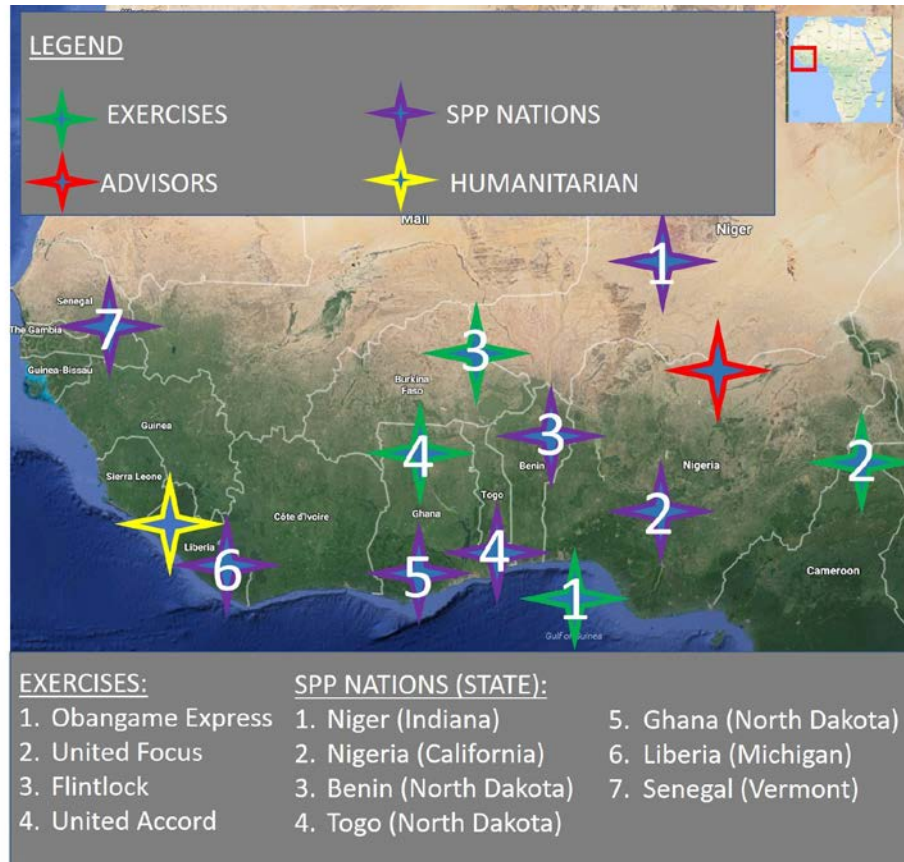


Figure 4. U.S. DoD Security Cooperation Activities in West Africa

Source: Google Maps, “West Africa,” accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.google.com/maps/@14.6331387,2.785149,2749339m/data=!3m1!1e3>, Modified by Author.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter examined the relevant literature with regard to the secondary research questions, listed below:

1. To what extent has Chinese resource extraction increased in West Africa since 2006?

2. What compensation is China offering to nations in exchange for resource extraction?
3. Has Chinese geopolitical involvement in West Africa increased in the past decade?
4. How has U.S. security cooperation activity increased in West African nations since 2006?
5. Is greater security cooperation partnership planned between the U.S. and West African nations?

Chapter 4 addresses amalgamated findings and conclusions drawn from the literature review, including additional analysis and processing of information obtained.

Chapter 3 addresses research methodology used in this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Chapter Introduction

In order to answer the primary research question, “has Chinese resource investment in West Africa impacted U.S. military access in the region” and the associated secondary research questions, the researcher executed multiple methods of analysis. Included among those methods were: a thorough literature review; identification of potential confounding factors through qualitative analysis of relevant literature; and the application of evaluation criteria. Once complete, amalgamated answers to the secondary research questions, combined with any identified trends or confounding factors, allowed the researcher to arrive at a conclusion on the primary research question.

This research began with a thorough review of relevant, topical literature related to the secondary research questions. Next, a systematic, sequential research methodology was applied to provide structure to the research process. Once qualitative analysis was performed on the research results and data from the secondary research questions, evaluation criteria were applied in order to reach a conclusion to the primary research question.

After discussion of the answer to the primary research question, the researcher discussed recommendations for future research, to include questions left unanswered by this study. In addition, the researcher made recommendations with regard to military applications of the research at hand, and the answer to the primary research question.



## Research Methodology

The following is a systematic, sequential methodology used by the researcher when conducting this study:

Step 1: the researcher conducted a review of all relevant literature related to the primary research question and the secondary research questions. The results of that literature review are outlined in chapter 2 of this study.

Step 2: the researcher developed evaluation criteria for the secondary research questions and other confounding factors, for application after other analysis. This will be discussed in chapter 4.

Step 3: the researcher conducted a qualitative analysis of relevant data produced in the literature review. In doing so, the researcher sought to identify any existing other factors which may reinforce or negate trends identified in the literature review, thus adding insight to the conclusion of the primary research question. This will be discussed in chapter 4.

Step 4: the researcher applied the evaluation criteria to the secondary research questions and the findings to those questions, thereby allowing for a clear conclusion and finding to the primary research question. This will be discussed in chapter 4.

Step 5: the researcher answered the primary research question. This will be discussed in chapter 4.

Step 6: the researcher drew conclusions from the study, to include the identification of questions left unanswered, and topics for further research in the future. The researcher also identified potential military applications for the research conducted. This will be discussed in chapter 5.

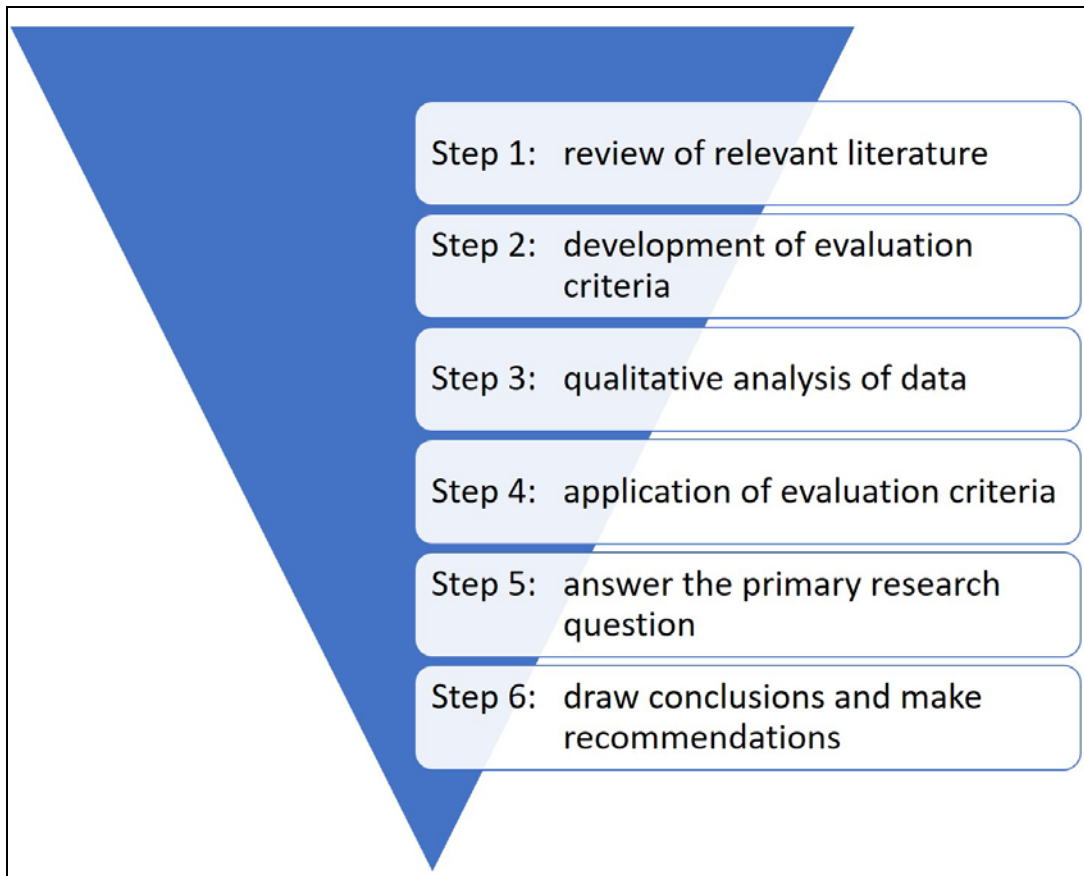


Figure 5. Research Methodology

*Source:* Generated by the author

### Evaluation Criteria

As the U.S. uses the full range of military operations (ROMO), from peacetime security operations to violent conflict, as an instrument of national power and extension of its influence as a nation, determining what impacts the access of the U.S. military in any given region is challenging. Still, in order to inform the conclusion to the primary research question, this study will apply evaluation criteria to the secondary research questions, listed below:

1. To what extent has Chinese resource extraction increased in West Africa since 2006?
2. What compensation is China offering to nations in exchange for resource extraction?
3. Has Chinese geopolitical involvement in West Africa increased in the past decade?
4. How has U.S. security cooperation activity increased in West African nations since 2006?
5. Is greater security cooperation partnership planned between the U.S. and West African nations?

Additionally, as other factors are identified after qualitative research analysis, the same evaluation criteria will be applied to those factors, individually. What will result is a clear picture which will allow the researcher to answer the primary research question.

The evaluation criteria table is seen below:

“No impact on U.S. military access” means that findings from secondary research questions or confounding factors do not reasonably compel or prevent the U.S. military from operating across West Africa, or the U.S. government from pursuing interests through means spanning the ROMO. When seeking to answer the primary research question, these findings or factors would be given the least consideration, if any at all. As the evaluation criteria are applied, this category carries a weight of zero points.

“Impact unable to be determined” indicates that findings or confounding factors may or may not compel or prevent the U.S. military from operating across West Africa, or the U.S. government from pursuing interests through means spanning the ROMO.

When seeking to answer the primary research question, these findings or factors would be considered, but not very strongly. As the evaluation criteria are applied, this category carries a weight of zero points.

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria–General				
Question/Factor	No impact on U.S. military access (0 points)	Impact unable to be determined (0 points)	Likely impact on U.S. military access (1 point)	Highly likely impact on U.S. military access (2 points)
1) Chinese resource extraction in West Africa				
2) Chinese compensation to West African nations				
3) Chinese geopolitical activity in West Africa				
4) Current and planned U.S. SCA in West Africa				
Other Factors (to be determined during qualitative research analysis)				

*Source:* Generated by the researcher.

“Likely impact on U.S. military access” are factors or findings that suggest a link to the U.S. military either being compelled or prevented to operate across the ROMO in West Africa. These findings and factors will receive positive consideration when attempting to answer the primary research question, but do not suggest strong linkages. As the evaluation criteria are applied, this category carries a weight of one point.

“Highly likely impact U.S. military access” are factors or findings that suggest a strong link to the U.S. military either being compelled or prevented to operate across the ROMO in West Africa. These findings and factors will receive the highest levels of consideration when attempting to answer the primary research question, but do not suggest strong linkages. As the evaluation criteria are applied, this category carries a weight of two points.

#### Threats to Validity and Researcher Biases

Multiple factors presented a threat to validity when conducting this research. The most notable is the sources of the literature review. A number of the relevant sources are local or regional news sources in West Africa. As the researcher is not fluently versed in West African politics and local issues, identifying bias in these news sources is difficult. Similarly, many other sources in the literature review are controlled by the Chinese state, so accuracy and validity of reporting cannot easily be determined. This problem exists for some referenced U.S. sources, though the researcher will attempt to annotate potential bias or questionable validity where applicable.

A second threat to validity was the availability of data to research. This applies to two issues: Chinese compensation to West African nations in exchange for resource extraction; and U.S. force size, basing and operations in West Africa. Given a potential

lack of willingness by all parties to disclose aforementioned information, due to a desire to limit concern or the sensitive nature of such information, data may very well exist that is inadvertently excluded from this study.

The researcher remained mindful of his own biases, and how said biases could impact the research or conclusions. The researcher views this problem, the relevant literature, and the evaluation criteria through the lens of an intelligence officer in the U.S. military. That lens produces a bias that constantly looks for malfeasance in nation states, and competition with or challenges to U.S. influence around the globe. Through acknowledgement and mindfulness throughout the research process, the researcher tempered said lens and associated biases to produce a fair and accurate assessment.

### Chapter Summary

In applying the research methodology depicted in this chapter, the researcher strived to attain a holistic answer to the primary and secondary research questions. A review of relevant literature, qualitative analyses of the data, the application of evaluation criteria, and the resulting aggregation of findings, provided a clear path to answering the primary research question, “has Chinese resource investment in West Africa impacted U.S. military access in the region?” Chapter 4 provides qualitative analysis of the data collected in this research process.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### Chapter Introduction

This chapter contains the presentation and analysis of all data collected during this research process. The goal of this presentation and analysis is to answer the primary research question, “has Chinese resource investment in West Africa impacted U.S. military access in the region?” The secondary research questions were answered through a systemic review of the relevant literature on this topic, and by following the research methodology outlined in chapter 3. Those answers, combined with other factors uncovered during the literature review, lead to a conclusion presented at the end of this chapter.

#### Step 1: Summary of Literature Review

The systemic literature review provided answers to the secondary research questions outlined in this study. The literature review also allowed for the identification of other factors that affect the issue addressed in this study. The full literature review with referenced sources can be found in chapter 2.

The first topic addressed by the literature review was the scope and extent of Chinese mineral extraction in West Africa. Six facilities, consisting of three iron mines, two oil fields (three, if Diffa is counted; China has no drilling rights in the Diffa oil fields), and one refinery. The iron mines fall in the westernmost countries within West Africa, while the oil sites fall largely in the easternmost countries. Additionally, and surprisingly, one iron mine is privately owned by a Hong Kong based company. While

operations continue at all sites, there are reported instances of turbulence between local workers and Chinese company officials, due to such issues as improper wages, poor treatment, etc.

Second, the literature review covered the compensation West African nations received for Chinese mineral extraction. Three key areas are most common: increased trade/economic cooperation, to include debt relief; infrastructure development and overhaul; and humanitarian assistance, mostly seen via schools and hospitals. Economically, China mostly deals in aid packages and debt relief. Additionally, China focuses on the poorer nations in West Africa that look to capitalize on large resource caches. Most of the infrastructure projects China develops serve to transport extracted resources to ports for export, in addition to any benefit gained by the host nation. In addition to the aforementioned schools and hospitals, China provided tens of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid during the Ebola outbreak. A secondary item of compensation is the cultural exchange that China actively seeks to foster with West African nations.

Third, the literature review addressed Chinese geopolitical activity in West Africa over the last decade. While the current Chinese president has not visited West Africa, the previous president did. Across the last 10 years, multiple Chinese FMs have visited West African countries, because it is routine for Chinese leadership to maintain strong ties with the resource-rich nations. Similarly, a number of Leaders and cabinet-level ministers from West Africa have visited China. The highest levels of geopolitical activities, whether it be Chinese leader visits to the region or West African leader visits to China, are seen in Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana and, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Those countries



comprise five of the six that this comprise the focus of this study, because the facilities researched are in these countries.

Fourth, this study addressed current and future U.S. SCA in West Africa. In the time period observed, USAFRICOM stood up, and military engagement across the continent increased. While West Africa is not home to any acknowledged U.S. military bases, the DoD routinely partners with a number of West African nations for multinational exercises, focusing on regional security and force interoperability. Additionally, four U.S. states are aligned with six West African nations as part of the U.S. Army National Guard SPP. The Ebola outbreak caused a dramatic uptick in U.S. military humanitarian aid in the region.

Finally, an unknown quantity of U.S. military advisors are in West Africa to combat Boko Haram. While reports of advisors being sent to Nigeria abound, the nature and locations of a number of AFRICOM exercises suggest that the U.S. military's approach to Boko Haram relies heavily on training (and potentially equipping?) West African nations. As the size and scope of these exercises continues to increase, more and more West African nations will be equipped to handle the threat of Boko Haram.

In addition to the topics covered by the secondary research questions, the literature review revealed a number of other factors not within the purview of the secondary research questions. Those topics and explanations of their impacts will be addressed later in this chapter.

### Step 2: Development of Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria provide weighted value to each of topics covered by the secondary research questions, as well as other factors that were identified during the

literature review. Once all of the factors are weighted, it will shed light on an answer to the primary research question. The results of the application of the evaluation criteria appear later in this chapter, after the qualitative analysis is presented. A full explanation of the evaluation criteria, with associated weighted values and explanations of meaning can be found in chapter 2.

### Step 3: Qualitative Analysis of Data

A robust qualitative analysis was performed to take the findings from the secondary research questions, identify trends or relationships between factors, and present other factors not previously identified in the literature review. Also included in this section is an amalgamation of findings, adding context to the research, and leading toward a more considerate and accurate answer to the primary research question.

When examining the findings from the literature review, the text does not accurately convey the proximity of activities and facilities. As such, Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the locations of Chinese iron mines and oil fields, as well as approximate locations of US SCA. Also included are areas impacted by Boko Haram and the Ebola outbreak of 2014-2016.

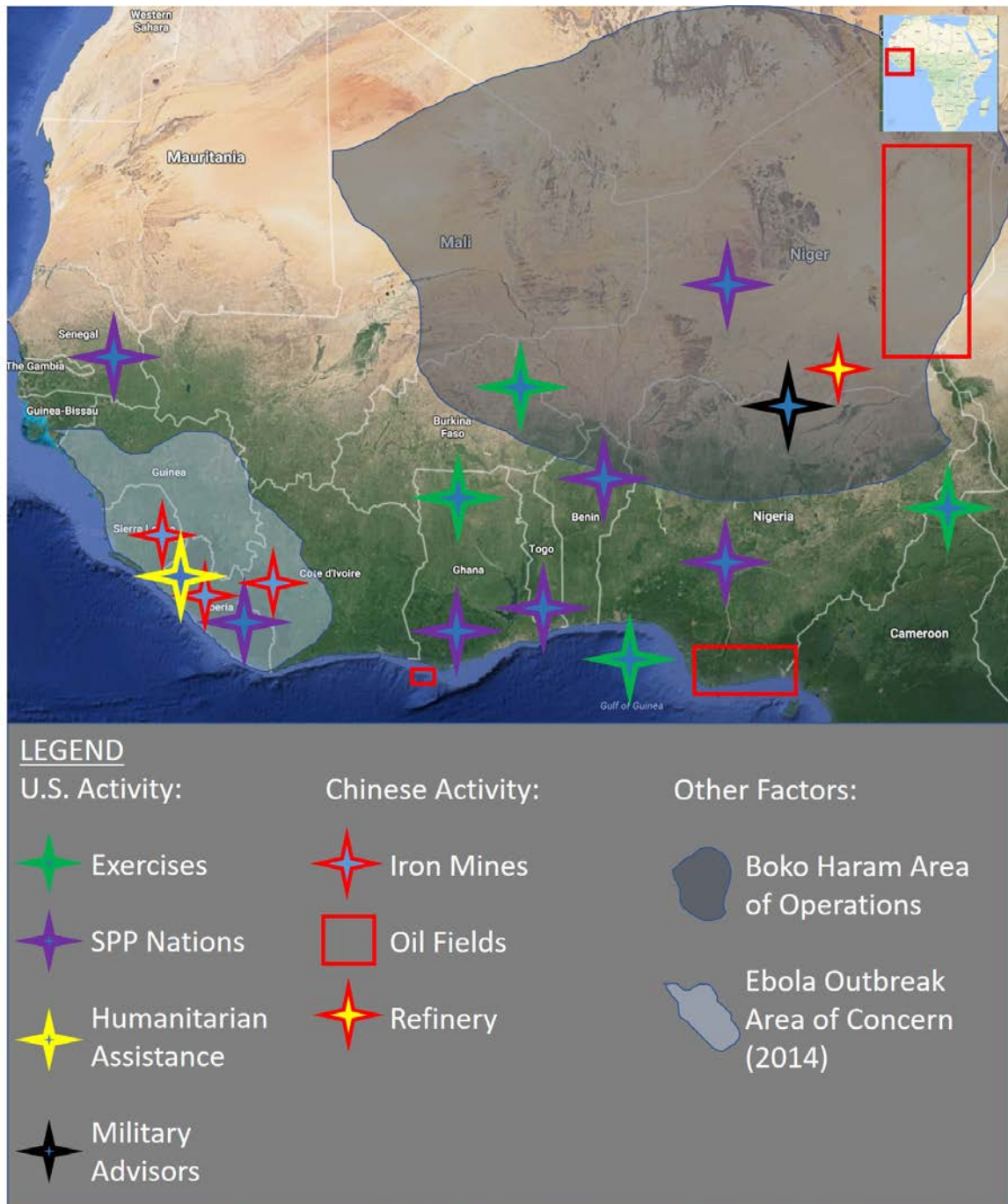


Figure 6. U.S. Security Cooperation Activities and Chinese Resource Extraction Activities

Source: Google Maps, "West Africa," accessed April 7, 2017, <https://www.google.com/maps/@14.6331387,2.785149,2749339m/data=!3m1!1e3>, Modified by Author.

Figure 6 suggests a number of relationships between Chinese resource extraction activities and U.S. SCA. The most significant U.S. activity in the region comes in two forms: humanitarian aid, and the deployment of military advisors to assist in the fight against Boko Haram. Each of these activities falls within close proximity to major Chinese facilities—the three iron mines, and the Soraz refinery. Similarly, Exercise OBANGAME EXPRESS takes place solely in the Gulf of Guinea, very close to the sites of two Chinese oil fields. However, these events plotted across time provide greater context to the situation, as depicted in Figure 7.

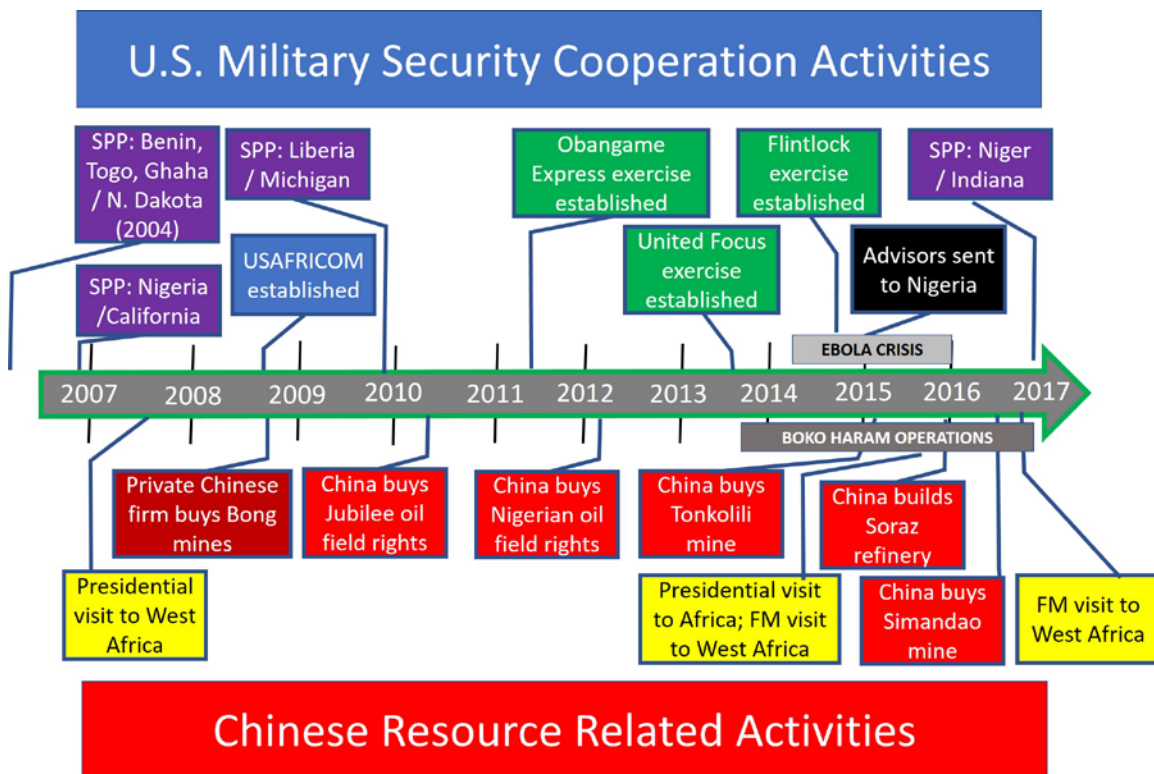


Figure 7. Event Timeline

Source: Generated by the author

Viewing these events and the buying or building of facilities on a timeline suggests different trends. For example, all of the facilities studied in this research were acquired or built after the establishment of USAFRICOM. Similarly, a majority of these facilities were built or acquired after the establishment of SPP alignments and multinational exercises in West Africa. Both the U.S. and China exhibited robust activity in the region in the last decade, but the timeline of events suggests that the U.S. is more consistent in its SCA than China in its resource-related activities. Though this research addresses two different, but competing, tools of influence, the timeline almost suggests that China's resource extraction activity in West Africa is reactionary to growing U.S. influence via SCA. This idea does not take into account U.S. private sector activity, which may likely be a stronger factor in Chinese resource-related activity.

Other trends arise from the secondary research questions and resulting literature review. As noted previously, resource extraction brought an influx of one million Chinese workers. And this presence of Chinese nationals introduces Chinese people, language, and culture to the populations of West African nations (Park 2016). Though perceptions of Chinese migrant workers vary across the African continent, there is no question that these workers accelerate economic growth and development, and this fact is not lost on the people of West African nations (Park 2016). This highlights the first potentially confounding factor: presence.

A secondary benefit of Chinese migration to West Africa, partly as a result of resource extraction, is a more formal cultural exchange. In Nigeria, which has maintained cultural relations with China for decades, more and more elementary and secondary students are learning to speak Chinese (Floracruz 2015), leading the FMPRC to open a

Chinese language center open to the public. A Nigerian Senator even praised Chinese political establishments on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of China's Communist Party. Student exchanges between the two nations, and an influx of Chinese news and entertainment media are regular occurrences on television networks in Nigeria (Ramani 2016). China exports culture, which is the ultimate form of soft power.

Considering geopolitical activities, the U.S. and China are roughly even. Just as one Chinese president visited the region in the last decade, President Bush visited West Africa twice (Henry and McCaughan 2008). And while both announced sizable aid packages for nations in the region, President Bush, in response to a reporter's question, reassured those gathered that the U.S. did not want to establish permanent basing in the region. This suggests a second potentially confounding factor: perception—more so, the perception that China is in West Africa for business and trade purposes only, whereas the U.S. may be looking to expand its military basing.

Regarding current and future SCA, the U.S. has shown that it is committed to security and interoperability in the region. Across Africa, the largest number of USAFRICOM exercises take place in West Africa. A vast majority of SPP alignments are with West African nations. The U.S. military response to the Ebola crisis was a major undertaking, and is frequently credited with containing the outbreak and preventing a catastrophe (Nissenbaum and Barnes 2015). But in light of these milestones, other signs point to the U.S. placing little, if any importance on the region. Consider that USAFRICOM remains in Stuttgart, Germany, despite invitations from Liberian leaders to move the headquarters to Monrovia (Stata 2010). Statements regarding Africa in Quadrennial Defense Reviews and National Security Strategies over the last decade only

refer to the defeat of trans-national terrorist organizations. This brings attention to another potentially confounding factor: priority.

When examining other factors identified in the literature review that could additionally impact the topic at hand, the first suggested is the idea of presence. With expanding Chinese resource extraction activity in West Africa comes larger numbers of Chinese migrants to the region. Chinese leaders, from the President to the FM to other ministers frequently visit West Africa, and China warmly welcomes West African leaders on a routine basis. Chinese television and radio programming is all over West African airwaves. China, via people and culture, is very much present in West Africa (Park 2016). As noted earlier, presence leads to familiarity, for better or worse. What little presence the U.S. projected in the region has been significant, but temporary and inconsistent.

The second factor identified in the literature review is perception. While West African countries realize exactly what China is after—resources to fuel its expanding economy—it is also very clear that China does not wish to interfere in national or regional issues. This overt Chinese position works; resource-rich nations in West Africa (and beyond) are willing to work with China on a purely economic, quid pro quo basis. But the second and third order effects go largely unseen. Nations around the globe that hold strong bilateral trade with China, under the “no strings attached” umbrella, often end up expanding those relations. This takes the form of greater trade, weapons sales, and even political support. For instance, nations with strong Chinese trade bonds began to vote against UN resolutions that they previously have supported, but which they Chinese opposed. This “gravitational effect” of a non-interference policy enables China to build political coalitions without the perception of posing its will on any partner nation (Kreps

and Flores-Macías 2013). In contrast, the U.S. is frequently seen as cooperating with other nations only when certain conditions are met, such as political corruption, human rights, or democracy in government. The perception of the U.S. and its military are not necessarily favorable in West Africa. This is evident by the now notorious question posed to President Bush on his visit in 2008.

Finally, the idea of priorities was a prominent underlying theme from the literature review. The priority of the U.S., from a SCA perspective in the last decade, has been to contain and counter trans-national terrorism. Terrorist organizations have not posed a grave threat to the region, save for Boko Haram in Mali and Niger, in the last decade. Therefore, the priority of the U.S. has not been West Africa. Similarly, from a geopolitical perspective, West Africa has not garnered many high-level official U.S. visits. In contrast, because of the strong trade agreements, West Africa is a frequent stop for Chinese leaders. Those visits speak to the importance of relations between China and many West African nations.

The next section will apply the evaluation criteria to all identified trends discussed in this section. After the evaluation criteria is applied and amalgamated, the primary research question can be answered.



#### Step 4: Application of Evaluation Criteria

Table 2. Evaluation Criteria–Chinese Resource Extraction				
Question	No impact (0 points)	Unable to determine (0 points)	Likely impact (1 point)	Highly likely impact (2 points)
1) Resource extraction			<b>X</b>	

*Source:* Generated by the author.

Secondary research question 1: To what extent has Chinese resource extraction increased in West Africa since 2006? Based on the findings in the literature review and the quantitative analysis, the scope and extent of Chinese resource extraction likely impacts U.S. SCA in West Africa. In this case, the impact is likely negative; i.e., the scope and extent of resource extraction is a hindrance to U.S. military access.

Table 3. Evaluation Criteria–Chinese Compensation for Resource Extraction				
Question	No impact (0 points)	Unable to determine (0 points)	Likely impact (1 point)	Highly likely impact (2 points)
2) Compensation			<b>X</b>	

*Source:* Generated by the author.

Secondary research question 2: What compensation is China offering to nations in exchange for resource extraction? Similarly, the compensation provided by China in West Africa likely hinders U.S. military access, but only to a moderate extent, at best.

Table 4. Evaluation Criteria–Chinese Geopolitical Activity				
Question	No impact (0 points)	Unable to determine (0 points)	Likely impact (1 point)	Highly likely impact (2 points)
3) Geopolitical activity			<b>X</b>	

*Source:* Generated by the author.

Secondary research question 3: Has Chinese geopolitical involvement in West Africa increased in the past decade? Yes, but again, only to a moderate extent. Especially when compared to U.S. geopolitical activity, though outside the scope of this research, the Chinese show a clear advantage in this category, much to this disadvantage of U.S. military access.

Table 5. Evaluation Criteria–U.S. Current and Future SCA				
Question	No impact (0 points)	Unable to determine (0 points)	Likely impact (1 point)	Highly likely impact (2 points)
4-5) Current and future SCA				<b>X</b>

*Source:* Generated by the author

Secondary research questions 4 and 5: How has U.S. security cooperation activity increased in West African nations; Is greater security cooperation partnership planned between the U.S. and West African nations? This research question mainly addresses the quality and quantity of what the U.S. has already done in terms of SCA, and how

effective those activities have been. From the research and resulting analysis, U.S. activities, though limited in scope, have had an unquestioningly positive impact.

Table 6. Evaluation Criteria–Presence				
Other Factor	No impact (0 points)	Unable to determine (0 points)	Likely impact (1 point)	Highly likely impact (2 points)
1) Presence				<b>X</b>

*Source:* Generated by the author.

Other factor 1: Presence. Presence, as defined above, goes beyond the topics addressed by the secondary research questions. It has a major impact on U.S. access in West Africa, in a negative sense thus far. U.S. military presence is significant, but inconsistent. When compared with the constant physical and cultural presence of the Chinese, it hinders current and future U.S. access.

Table 7. Evaluation Criteria–Perception				
Other Factor	No impact (0 points)	Unable to determine (0 points)	Likely impact (1 point)	Highly likely impact (2 points)
2) Perception				<b>X</b>

*Source:* Generated by the author.

Other factor 2: Perception. Again, beyond the scope measured in the secondary research questions, or perhaps a sum that is greater than the addition of the parts, the U.S.

military faces a problem of perception in West Africa. U.S. military and government motives are frequently questioned, leading to a suspicion, and a lack of eager willingness to cooperate.

Table 8. Evaluation Criteria–Priority				
Other Factor	No impact (0 points)	Unable to determine (0 points)	Likely impact (1 point)	Highly likely impact (2 points)
3) Priority				<b>X</b>

*Source:* Generated by the author.

Other factor 3: Priority. Again, a major impact on U.S. military access is priority shown by the U.S. military, versus the Chinese economic machine. While cooperation exists, regional security outside the bounds of trans-national terrorism is only a recent phenomenon between the U.S. DoD and West African nations, whereas China has made economic ties with West Africa, mostly via state-owned corporations, a top-tier priority of their national strategy.

The next section presents the amalgamated factors and evaluation criteria, as well as the answer to the primary research question and expanded rationale.

Step 5: Answer to Primary Question

Table 9. Evaluation Criteria–Amalgamated factors				
Question	No impact on U.S. military access (0 points)	Impact unable to be determined (0 points)	Likely impact on U.S. military access (1 point)	Highly likely impact on U.S. military access (2 points)
1) Chinese resource extraction in West Africa			<b>X</b>	
2) Chinese compensation to West African nations			<b>X</b>	
3) Chinese geopolitical activity in West Africa			<b>X</b>	
4-5) Current and planned U.S. SCA in West Africa				<b>X</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Other Factors	No impact on U.S. military access (0 points)	Impact unable to be determined (0 points)	Likely impact on U.S. military access (1 point)	Highly likely impact on U.S. military access (2 points)
1) Presence				<b>X</b>
2) Perception				<b>X</b>
3) Priority				<b>X</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>				<b>6</b>

*Source:* Generated by the author.

Applying the evaluation criteria to factors addressed by the secondary research questions, as well as other factors identified during the literature review, an answer to the

primary research question becomes clear. Yes, Chinese resource extraction and related activities has impacted U.S. military access in West Africa. But, it is not the only factor, and very likely not the main contributing factor. Chinese resource extraction activities, when combined with other circumstances, give rise to a series of other, overarching factors that have the most significant impact on U.S. military access.

#### Step 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

The last step in the research process is to present conclusions reached by this study, address recommendations for future research, and identify recommendations and implications for policymakers. This is found in chapter 5.

#### Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative analysis of all data collected during the literature review, and ultimately answered the primary research question, “has Chinese resource investment in West Africa impacted U.S. military access in the region?” The next chapter addresses conclusions, recommendations for future research, and implications to policymakers.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Chapter Introduction

As presented in the previous chapter, the answer to the primary research question, “has Chinese resource investment in West Africa impacted U.S. military access in the region?” is yes, but with caveats. Mainly, Chinese resource investment and related activities have been a significant factor, but not the main factor that has shaped and influenced U.S. military access in West Africa. But the factors originally hypothesized via the secondary research questions are not the only factors at play. Other factors—presence, perception, and priority—showed greater impact as a result of the literature review and analysis. The rest of this chapter will address the overall conclusions reached in this study, then recommend future research and implications for policymakers.

#### Conclusions

The initial expectation of the researcher when performing this study was a clear line of causation; China is investing a lot, and that is either freezing out the U.S. military, or causing it to ramp up activity, in order to stay competitive and maintain influence. After conducting the research, the problem set and related factors are not bound by that simple dichotomy. Simply focusing on military engagement and access, especially from the lens of a military professional, gives a largely incomplete picture of national interests and international competition in any region of the world. Even in regions of the world that appear to be less complex, West Africa for example, this research shows that the

instruments of national power employed by the U.S. are interrelated, and there are multiple overarching factors that are directly involved or related to each instrument.

It is vital to continue examining how the U.S. maintains influence in an increasingly dynamic global environment. Inherent in that is the study of how other nations attempt to challenge or subvert U.S. influence in all areas of the world, not just the “hot spots” of yesterday and today. Moving forward, an integrated, tandem approach is more necessary and appropriate than ever before in the history of this country.

While this research focused solely on U.S. DoD SCA in West Africa, there are a number of other governmental and non-governmental organizations conducting operations. The Department of State, USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Clinton Foundation represent only a few of many non-military organizations that strive to raise quality of life and stability in West Africa. A secondary effect of their operations is to foster closer relations with the U.S. But, the USAFRICOM Commander, as with all military combatant commanders (CCDRs), is charged with leading Unified Action. Defined by U.S. DoD Joint Publication (JP) 1:

Unified action synchronizes, coordinates, and/or integrates joint, single-Service, and multinational operations with the operations of other USG departments and agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) (e.g., the United Nations) and the private sector to achieve unity of effort. (U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff 2013, xiii)

Though oversight of Unified Action is done in coordination with the President, Secretary of Defense, and other national leadership, are geographic CCDRs the best government representatives to lead this combined approach?

Additionally, increased cooperation between the private and public sectors in foreign policy would increase U.S. competitiveness globally. Consider that most of the



Chinese companies operating in West Africa are state owned. This relationship binds together economic activity with Chinese state influence in the region. This study did not examine U.S. private sector engagement in West Africa, or its implications on U.S. access (albeit military or government as a whole) in the region.

With regard to West Africa, and the African continent as a whole, continued engagement is vital not only for current U.S. interests, but to ensure a stability and security in a region that could easily collapse. Consider a recent article from the Georgetown Security Studies Review:

Africa faces several challenges in the coming years, and many stem from ineffective security institutions and weak or nonexistent governance. The US interagency has the tools to help address these shortcomings and empower our African partners to meet their internal security threats. But this requires sustained support and synchronization across the US interagency community. There will be powerful incentives to reduce such engagement, particularly if funding for “soft power” is reduced. (Livermore, 2017)

As the country continues to operate in a fiscally constrained environment with proposals for more money spent on defense and less on other instruments of national power, it is worthwhile to consider what the consequences of that course of action will be. Will West Africa, or elsewhere in Africa become the next Middle East? As Boko Haram encroaches on the region, multiple impoverished nations could easily fall victim to the influence of terrorist organizations. A military approach alone is not likely to work, if history is any guide. Now, more than ever, a whole-of-government and interagency approach is vital to our success as a nation, and our prominence on the world stage.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This study looked at one of four U.S. instruments of national power, versus the main form of Chinese governmental engagement in West Africa. While the two

approaches—military versus state industry—are very different, they are the main approaches of the U.S. and China, respectively, in West Africa right now. The most obvious topic for future research is comparing U.S. economic trade versus that of China in West Africa. Despite the fact that most U.S. trade is private/commercial, and most Chinese trade is state owned, the research shows potential benefits for whole-of-government access in the region from the U.S. standpoint.

This study examined U.S. SCA from a purely military standpoint. SCA, as noted in chapter 2 and as recognized by USAFRICOM, is truly a joint endeavor between military, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Even though interagency partners are integral parts of the SCA process, geographic CCDRs lead and oversee the process. An in-depth examination of the efficacy of the role of the CCDR in the SCA process, and of the relationships between CCDRs and ambassadors, would be a useful topic of future research. No matter what the findings, a study addressing this topic could help U.S. officials refine, improve or enhance the conduct of SCA worldwide.

Also, as China expands relations beyond trade in West Africa in the years to come, a similar useful research topic is comparing effects and effectiveness of U.S. SCA versus the Chinese equivalent. A potential problem exists in the availability of complete and accurate information, which plagued this study throughout.

Finally, one of the conclusions of this study touched upon a U.S. whole-of-government approach to West Africa. An increasingly relevant course of study would be the observation of changes in a whole-of-government approach (the application of all instruments of national power) in West Africa, and the effects of those changes. While large in scope, such research would be of great use to national leaders and policymakers

in the coming decades, as the U.S. seeks to gain, retain or expand its influence not just in West Africa, but across the continent as a whole.

### Recommendations and Implications for Policymakers

While SCA, especially on the humanitarian front, carries a lot of weight in developing countries and regions of the world, it is not immune to other factors from a holistic perspective. Just because a benevolent military force goes to a country or region to help the local population does not mean it will meet the warmest of receptions. While these lessons were learned the hard way in Vietnam, and again in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. DoD cannot forget the idea of “hearts and minds” as it operates in other regions of the world, across the ROMO spectrum. West Africa embodies a culture and a set of values that is largely foreign to today’s U.S. military, which underscores the importance of thoroughly studying and understanding that culture as the military tries to partner with nations in the region. The Army’s concept of Regionally Aligned Forces begins to address this idea, but focuses largely on capabilities and interoperability, as opposed to cultural understanding and adaptation (Cantwell, Warren, and Orwat 2015).

While China, like the U.S., values the notion of soft power, the Chinese state does not attain or use soft power in the same way that the U.S. does. If the goal of U.S. actions in Africa and across the globe is to effectively compete with the Chinese for influence, or simply to balance growing Chinese power, it is time to re-examine how the U.S. utilizes soft power across cultures. Presence, perception and priority are not just buzz words dreamt up for the purposes of this thesis. Those concepts are what makes nations successful in influencing other nations in peaceful ways—building partnerships as opposed to proxies. As the U.S. military evolves and progresses after the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan, and as the U.S. government continues to operate in a fiscally constrained environment, the time to identify innovative ways to gain soft power is now. The Chinese have mastered this in West Africa, and other parts of the continent. The U.S. shouldn't and doesn't need to mimic their approach, but a thorough study of their successes would be valuable.

### Parting Thoughts

It is fairly easy for novice strategists to focus on one element of strategy, and downplay or completely disregard others when approaching a problem. This is not limited to military professionals, either—junior or mid-level economists, diplomats, and government officials likely fall into similar traps when discussing international challenges. If the U.S. is to succeed in West Africa, a coordinated approach is required. Nuanced and intentional actions with an end state in mind are crucial. That is the basis of strategy. This thesis shows that focusing on a single approach often uncovers more complex factors that fall outside the scope of that approach. In order to truly master strategy from a national perspective, the days of single-sourced international affairs are over. The best example of that is the exact topic that this thesis examined. Moving forward, perhaps an examination of how the U.S. military builds strategy and strategists, in tandem with other governmental and non-governmental organizations, is in order.

Finally, U.S. and Chinese governmental activities on the African continent does not need to be viewed as a “zero sum game;” i.e., there does not need to be a winner and a loser. Both nations, as well as the nations of West Africa and across the continent, can benefit from cooperation or healthy competition. The U.S. and China likely have more interests in common in West Africa than either nation realizes, and cooperation to

achieve those mutual goals would strengthen each, as well as the nations and the people in West Africa.

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